

Guidelines for Working with English Language Learners to consider in conjunction with Teach Like a Champion techniques

Provided by English Learner Support Division, TEA

General, but very important suggestions:

- *English learners benefit from being exposed to **comprehensible input**.* This means that the teacher may need to speak more slowly and clearly than is evidenced in some of the Texas TLAC Online videos. If the teacher speaks rapidly, English learners will likely not understand what is being asked of them or explained to them. For formulaic utterances (“track me,” etc.), the teacher should **introduce** the phrase, **repeat** it, **promote choral response** of the phrase, then **model** what it is directing the students to do. Once an English learner has internalized the formulaic directives, the teacher may **speed up** and use them at a more rapid pace.
- *English learners require **wait time**.* English learners may need extra time to process information they hear in English, either by replaying the English in their own head or translating into their native language, before they are asked to speak or respond. The teacher, and classmates, should be aware and provide wait time accordingly.
- *English learners benefit from **rehearsal time**.* This permits students to hear others model language and forms, take risks when expressing themselves using new language and forms (with a partner or in small group), and prepare to be able to speak out in front of the whole class or in conversation with the teacher.
- *English learners benefit from **repetition**, both by the teacher (of key terms and phrases) and by the whole class in choral fashion.* This permits the student to practice pronunciation of new words in a safe environment and to internalize new words and phrases. This is the most basic form of rehearsal.
- *English learners benefit from **contextual supports** to help them understand spoken English.* These may include gestures, and clear physical reference to posted words/visuals through pointing or use of a laser pointer.
- *English learners need to develop their productive and receptive language skills and these skills do not all develop at the same rate.* Teachers should identify which language domains they are requiring the student to use during a given lesson. For example: Are the students going to need to use listening skills (during a video, a mini-lecture, a partner or peer group discussion, or a read-aloud) or are they going to need to write (a description, observation, response, reflection, summary, story, etc.)? Receptive skills typically have a lower language load or language demand than productive skills, in which students need to generate “out of thin air” oral or written language.
- *Balance small group versus whole group to vary pacing and to ensure that students feel confident and safe in sharing out ideas and thinking.*

Technique Specific Guidance

Strong Voice

Establish Formal Register: Slowed quiet speech and posture are helpful to ELs, but ELs may not have the language needed to comprehend. For ELs, the teacher may need to point to words as he/she speaks, point to pictures/visuals/images to support spoken words, and use gestures to ensure that students understand the words.

Prior to setting students to work with a timer, it is crucial to check for understanding by permitting students to share directions with a partner, restate to the class, or do the action required. The teacher also may check in with the ELs once the class is set to the task to be sure the student understood what they are supposed to do. The teacher can not assume that the student understood, even if it looks like the student is quietly working.

Economy of Language and Quiet Power: Economy of language is very helpful to English learners, but still may not be enough for them to understand.

What to Do

Planning and Delivery: Step by step directions are helpful for English learners, but it also helps to have them posted, with visuals, to refer to them directly and to model the steps using gestures, especially for non-routine instructions and more complex, multi-step directions.

Art of the Sentence

Three Types of Prompts: Use of a sentence stem, word bank, or target vocabulary term, to focus student writing works well for English learners. However, English learners may not have the vocabulary and grammatical proficiency in English to craft these sentences without opportunities to practice by speaking with a partner or small group first. The student hears others articulate ideas and tries his/hers out. The student may also learn the word he/she only knows in their native language through this talk experience, or may hear how others complete an English sentence using the provided stem or prompt. Practice talk time sets the English learner up for success in writing. Without it, the English learner may be frustrated and not be able to complete the task successfully.

Double Plan

Lessons and Materials: This is an excellent strategy for ELs, with a couple of minor adjustments. On the “Teacher will” side of the T chart, the teacher can also list scaffolds he/she will use to ensure his/her input is comprehensible (modeling images, repetition, gestures, graphic organizers, etc.); on the “Student will” side of the T chart, the teacher can list scaffolds he/she will provide for the ELs in the class to promote successful language production, such as rehearsal time, sentence stems, anchor chart of strategies, etc.).

Exit Tickets

Design Criteria: Exit tickets can be very effective for English learners if the teacher carefully analyzes the language load and language demand of the lesson itself, as well as of the exit ticket as a product.

Analyze and Act: While teachers typically analyze and act, based on how well a student internalized the content of the lesson, teachers of English learners also need to analyze and act, based on how well the student was able to use language in the exit ticket. Reteach, additional practice, and mini-lessons may target content, language, or both. A teacher must be careful not to mistake language challenges with content challenges and must act in accordance with a consideration of both factors. Otherwise, the teacher may mistakenly mis-assess the student and waste valuable time re-teaching content the student knows while ignoring much-needed language development.

Plan for Error

Anticipate Error: Drafting the target response is a very powerful strategy for ELs, with an added step. Create a sentence stem that assists ELs at various proficiency levels to produce that response. When doing so, it is crucial that the teacher “test drive” the sentence stem and analyze the complexity of the piece of the sentence that the student needs to complete. A critical error teachers make is they focus on the part of the stem the teacher provides, but ignore the part of the sentence the student needs to produce.

Cold Call

Positive Cold Call Culture: Consider pre-calling or “warm” calling students—giving them rehearsal time—before calling on them to produce a response in front of the whole class.